

## Vote yes in the pay ballot

Throughout three lockdowns, school staff went above and beyond ensuring schools remained open, allowing other keyworkers to go to work and providing support to the most vulnerable children. Despite this, council and school workers have been offered just a 1.75% pay rise. With inflation running at over 3%, this is a real terms pay cut. Plus the value of local government pay has fallen by 25% since 2010.



Earlier this year UNISON launched a consultation to ask members to vote whether to accept or reject the final pay offer, with **79% voting to reject** – a resounding outcome, which indicates the strength of feeling amongst council and school workers.

On 1 October, the committee that members elect to make key decisions on their behalf decided that UNISON should move to ballot members to **ask if you are willing to take industrial action** in an effort to improve the offer and send a clear message.

UNISON members will start to receive ballot papers in early December. Look out for yours in the post and make sure you vote – **we need every single member to play your part and a clear 'yes' vote to show employers that enough is enough**. For now it's important for you to:

### 1. Check your details now

Make sure your details are correct – we need your up-to-date employment information and we must have accurate contact details.

Update your details online at [unison.org.uk/my-unison/](https://unison.org.uk/my-unison/)

It is *vital* that we get a high turnout in the vote. We must hear from everyone – every role, every workplace, every pay band.

### 2. Tell your colleagues

If your colleague is not a member of UNISON, that means they won't be able to vote, so make sure you tell them to join and have their say! It's important to use this as an opportunity to reach out – they care about their pay too. They can join online at [join.unison.org.uk](https://unison.org.uk/join), it takes 5 minutes.

### 3. Get involved

A range of useful materials are available to help you to tell your colleagues about the pay consultation. Use the graphics on social media and the hashtags **#VoteYes** and **#EnoughIsEnough** to help spread the word and make sure every member votes.

[unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/fair-pay-now-council-school-workers/](https://unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/fair-pay-now-council-school-workers/)

[Find out more](#)

 [UNISON in Schools](#)

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# 26 November – Stars in our Schools celebration day!

Friday 26 November is this year's annual day dedicated to celebrating school staff: the Stars in our Schools. We know that school support staff are vital to help children learn, keep them safe & healthy and keep the school running smoothly. Yet you don't get the attention you deserve despite making up half the school workforce. That's why we're taking a day to celebrate your work and raise awareness of the impact it has on young people in our schools.

Over the years, all types of schools have taken part in the celebration day. We are still in challenging times with Covid but we still think it is really important to mark the day given everything schools have been through. There are range of ways you can do this including online activities and risk assessed in-person events such as:

- Holding virtual assemblies or a dressing up day
- Asking the local MP to send a message of support and asking involving local press
- Arranging for pupils to interview support staff to find out what they do or holding a quiz.

Schools are under huge pressure. But it's more important than ever for UNISON to highlight the fantastic contributions of school support staff, who kept schools running in the most difficult of circumstances over the past year and a half. We would love your

school to get involved. It can be any time that works for your school, but our celebrations will culminate on 26 November.

There are lots of ideas and free resources (including materials in Welsh) on the special Stars website: <https://www.starsinourschools.uk/>. Contact your local UNISON branch to find out more.

UNISON is also running a competition for school staff who go the extra mile. The winning Stars and the person who nominates them both win a £25 voucher. You can make your nominations online at the Stars website.



**COVID-19**

## **UNISON – working for safer schools**

### **Carbon dioxide monitors – have you got yours? (England)**

One of the key routes of possible infection with COVID-19 is through the inhalation of the virus through the air. Good ventilation reduces how much virus is in the air, reducing the risk from aerosol transmission. This is when you breathe in small particles after a person with the virus has been in the same enclosed area, such as a classroom.

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) monitors give an indication of how well ventilated a room is. The monitors themselves are not a solution to the problem of poor ventilation. Instead they will indicate if action needs to be taken to improve ventilation.

UNISON welcomed the government's announcement to provide CO<sub>2</sub> monitors for schools in England during the autumn term, although we argued they should have been in place at a much earlier stage of the pandemic. The Department for Education (DfE) have provided

guidance about how to use the monitors but UNISON does not believe it is not good enough. We have taken our concerns to the Secretary of State.

Both SAGE and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) say that concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> should be kept at below 800 parts per million (ppm) in areas where there is continuous talking, like classrooms. The DfE guidance, however has chosen a higher level before action is taken. See our joint union guidance to schools [unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/covid-19-closures](https://unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/covid-19-closures) which has lots of suggestions, so take a look or mention it to whoever is responsible for health and safety at your school.

Report any concerns you have to the relevant managers in school and contact your UNISON branch if you need supporting in resolving your issues.

### **Member learning**

Did you know as a UNISON member you can access hundreds of free training courses? Schools and early years members can apply to get a free Skills Academy licence. These licences give you access to over 700 fully certified courses and allow you to study – in your own time and at your own pace – a large range of topics aimed at those working in the education sector. Plus plenty of other options like mental health and wellbeing, feng shui, creative writing and feline communication (and everything in between!).

To apply for a UNISON member account see: <https://learning.unison.org.uk/skills-academy/>.

### **Getting help as a member of UNISON**

Need help at work? The first step is contacting your branch. If you don't know the details, you can use our online enquiry form, or call the UNISONdirect call centre on

**0800 0 857 857.**

*UNISONdirect's hours are: Monday to Friday 7am to 11pm and Saturday 9am to 4pm.*

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Survey in England**

Thousands of you responded to our call in September to let us know what it's like working in special schools and in mainstream supporting children with SEND. Although many told us that you loved your job you also told us your worries and concerns.

Over half said that dealing with behaviour issues is your most pressing concern, particularly those that support learners with communication and interaction needs or those with social and emotional difficulties. So, we'll be working to bring you new, updated guidance that looks specifically at this issue.

Lots of you also told us that your role has changed significantly with job descriptions not matching your day job. This is not made easier for those who felt that employers were not supportive enough. Those of you who deal with healthcare needs pointed out the expectations to help children with increasingly complex needs. We will be developing a special section of our website to let you know what we are doing and how you and colleagues can make your concerns known to management - keep an eye out for this and keep us up-to-date.

We know you are doing a fantastic job and we will be making sure that everyone else knows this too!

# The positive impact of teaching assistants on pupil progress

Firstly, when we say teaching assistants, we do recognise this is a catch-all term! You may be a one-to-one, SEN TA, LSA, HLTA, classroom assistant, pupil support assistant.....the list goes on, and your duties in schools are as varied as the job titles.

Ten years ago, the Education Endowment Foundation, a leading independent education research organisation, launched its Teaching and Learning Toolkit. The toolkit summarises research into different approaches to raising pupil attainment and presents it in a practical way to help schools decide best strategies.

*“The difference I make is to children’s health, wellbeing, safety and happiness – this enables them to attain”*

The toolkit covers 30 approaches for improving learning outcomes, such as the use of feedback, reducing class size and teaching assistant (TA) interventions. Each approach is broken down into its impact on attainment, strength of the evidence and cost. It is updated as new high-quality research becomes available.

When the toolkit was first published, hardly any academic research had been carried out on TAs. Disappointingly, limited initial results suggested that while TAs brought value to school communities, generally they did not make a significant improvement to pupils’ educational progress.

As the union for TAs with a wealth of our own findings to the contrary, UNISON met with EEF and raised our concerns at this message. Noting the decimation of government funding for support staff training and development, we called for more detailed research to be done. We have always known the

hugely positive impact TAs make in schools, not just on pupil attainment but in providing pastoral support – even more so during the pandemic – and making it easier for teachers to focus on teaching.

*“I deliver the daily speech and language for a child with verbal dyspraxia. He is just starting to talk”*

Since then the EEF has funded further research into the impact of TAs. The toolkit now demonstrates that TAs, on average, add an additional four months’ pupil progress over the course of a year. Research which just focuses on TAs who provide one-to-one or small group targeted interventions shows a stronger positive benefit of between four and six additional months on average. The more research the EEF has carried out and assessed, the more this figure has increased.

Of course we welcome organisations carrying out research. However, what we now need is large-scale investment into support staff pay, training and development. UNISON continues to make this case to the government.

*“I ran a maths club and a pupil who asked for extra lessons with me achieved a C – two grades higher than predicted.”*

## Wales – calling TAs and HLTAAs to log their hours!

UNISON members often tell us that they are required to work additional hours that are not paid and are asked to do tasks outside of their contracted role. The results from a recent survey of Teaching Assistants in Wales, conducted by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) backed up this information. 21% of respondents said they are not able to effectively manage their workload within their contracted hours. And 28% of respondents felt they were under pressure to undertake tasks outside of their usual role.

In Wales we are starting a campaign to gather further information from our members with the aim of being able to use this data to better negotiate with Local Authorities in Wales on your behalf. We will soon be distributing log books to UNISON teaching assistant members to ask for their feedback.

If you would like to take part in this campaign please let us know at [cymruwalesschools@unison.co.uk](mailto:cymruwalesschools@unison.co.uk)

## School business networks

Do you work in school business management? Members tell us that this can sometimes be an isolating role poorly understood by others. The Department for Education host an online directory which allows you to find professional network groups in your local area and get peer-to-peer support. Search ‘networks for school business professionals’ in your usual search engine to find out more.

# Campaign for free school meals in Northern Ireland



UNISON Northern Ireland is campaigning for nutritious free school meals for all children. It has become clear that many families are struggling to make ends meet, and a report from Save the Children revealed that twice as many children living in poverty are from

working families. In other parts of the UK the move to provide free school meals to children of primary school age is a good start and we believe this should be replicated here but with further inclusion of children in secondary education.

We ran a huge billboard campaign advertising our campaign across the whole of Northern Ireland, alongside an online platform allowing the public to easily contact their local MLAs calling for free school meals for all. Our branches also pushed the campaign and we got photos across the region of supporters at billboards or with banners.

As part of the campaign and to highlight the benefits that providing free school meals would deliver, we successfully ran the 'All We Need Is Lunch' art competition.

Launching the campaign UNISON Northern Ireland Regional Secretary Patricia McKeown said:

"Our goal is that every child and young person in school gets a free, nutritious meal as part of their education package. We want a future for them that is free from diabetes and heart disease. We want a school catering system that treats them all equally.

"We hope that this initiative will be a fun, positive experience that will give children and young people

the chance to really think about what school meals can really mean to them - the good food, the sharing with friends, the healthy future, the great staff.

"With the Covid-19 pandemic having a major impact on family incomes, extending the provision of free school meals would act as a measure to promote public health, to reduce poverty and to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people."

The competition was a huge success with nearly 2000 school age entrants. The children are as passionate about free school meals as we are. This was clear from the fantastic art entered and the powerful messaging they contained. The Golden Thread Art Galley in Belfast installed the pieces in their public project space. UNISON NI held an event to conclude the competition with speeches and contributions from Patricia McKeown plus the NI Commissioner for Young People, Koulla Yiasouma, the Chief Executive of The Education Authority, Sara Long; our newly elected UNISON NEC representative from education Catherine McKenna and of course from the children themselves.

We now have a huge amount of fantastic material to continue our campaign.

This is a crucial time in the campaign as The Minister of Education, Michelle McIlveen, has announced that she will review the criteria for free school meals and the school uniform grant. We will continue the fight for free school meals for all and to ensure our members in school catering are recognised for the fantastic job that they do.



## JOIN UNISON ESSENTIAL COVER WHEREVER YOU WORK

We use this address to send you information core to your membership such as your membership pack, UNISON election information and any information relating to ballots if relevant

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### 1 Tell us about you

Title  First name  
Last name  
Home address

Email  
Postcode

We use this to contact you about trade union activities and services

Email  Text  Phone

Phone number (indicate home, work or mobile)  
By ticking these boxes, you are giving your consent for UNISON to contact you by these means about how we campaign on your behalf.

National insurance number

Date of birth

National insurance number

Date of birth

This information helps us find the best UNISON branch to support you and represent your needs

Email  Text  Phone

Employer's name

Your job title or occupation

Workplace name and address

Postcode

Your subscription rate is determined by how much you earn

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions

Annual pay	Core subscription	£14,001 - £17,000	£9.70	<input type="checkbox"/>
£0,000 - £2,000		£11.30		<input type="checkbox"/>
£2,001 - £5,000		£11.50		<input type="checkbox"/>
£5,001 - £8,000		£14.00		<input type="checkbox"/>
£8,001 - £11,000		£17.25		<input type="checkbox"/>
£11,001 - £14,000		£22.50		<input type="checkbox"/>
£35,001 - and over				<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2 Tell us about your job

This information helps us find the best UNISON branch to support you and represent your needs

Employer's name

Your job title or occupation

Workplace name and address

Postcode

### 3 What you will pay each month

Please tick the appropriate box for your earnings before deductions

Annual pay	Core subscription	£14,001 - £17,000	£9.70	<input type="checkbox"/>
£0,000 - £2,000		£17,001 - £20,000	£11.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
£2,001 - £5,000		£20,001 - £25,000	£14.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
£5,001 - £8,000		£25,001 - £30,000	£17.25	<input type="checkbox"/>
£8,001 - £11,000		£30,001 - £35,000	£20.30	<input type="checkbox"/>
£11,001 - £14,000				<input type="checkbox"/>
£35,001 - and over				<input type="checkbox"/>

This information tells us whether you wish to contribute an additional 5% towards UNISON's campaign fund

Campaign Fund  
The campaign fund promotes better public services, enables the union to talk with politicians of any party about the work our members do and supports the union's equalities work.

UNISON Labour Link  
Labour Link campaigns within the Labour Party locally and in Parliament for UNISON policy on the NHS, your employment rights and for quality public services.

No thank you  
I do not wish to contribute to campaigning at the moment. (Those who choose not to opt in will not be disadvantaged in any way as compared with members who do opt in.)

I don't wish to contribute at the moment, but you may contact me to tell me more.

**Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit**



#### UNISON Freepost (no other address needed)

Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

Please go to  
unison.org.uk/privacy-policy  
to see how we will protect  
and use your personal  
information

To the manager bank / building society

Address

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Account number

Branch sort code

Office use only  
Service user no.

Membership number

Postcode

We are legally required to keep your information up to date. You can amend your details via My UNISON at [www.unison.org.uk/my-unison](http://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison)

Please pay UNISON Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with UNISON and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature

Date